

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0148

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CONAKRY 1473

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR GV ET

SUBJECT : PRESIDE

T TOURE DENOUNCES VOA COVERATE OF EVENTS

IN ETHIOPIA

1. AT END OF LONG CONVERSATION SEPTEMBER 25, PRESIDENT TOURE ASKED ME HOW US VIEWED CURRENT HAPPENINGS IN ETHIOPIA. SAID MEMBERS OF HIS CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN PRESSING HIM FOR HIS VIEWS, WHICH HE HAD AVOIDED GIVING SO FAR BUT WOULD HAVE TO GIVE SOON. I REPLIED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO RESPOND AT THIS TIME, SINCE SITUATION APPEARS TO CHANGE DAILY AND IS FAR FROM CLEAR. US BELIEVES ESSENTIALLY THAT IT IS INTERNAL ETHIOPIAN MATTER, AND US AS MATTER OF POLICY DOES NOT INTERFERE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ANOTHER COUNTRY. WE HAVE MAINTAINED WORKING LEVEL CONTACTS WITH CURRENT REGIME, BUT HAVE PLAYED DOWN QUESTION OF RECOGNITION. PERSONALLY I REGRETTED MANNER TREATING HAILE SELASSIE WHO WAS HIGHLY RESPECTED THROUGHOUT AFRICA AND WORLD AS DEFENDER OF HIS COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE AND ADVOCATE OF AFRICAN LIBERATION.

2. PRESIDENT TOURE RESPONDED THAT WHAT HE HAD TO SAY MIGHT SEEM SURPRISING, IN VIEW OF HIS REPUTATION AS A REVOLUTIONARY LEADER, BUT HE WAS SHOCKED BY WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO EMPEROR
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HAILE SELASSIE. IN PARTICULAR, HE WAS SHOCKED AND OFFENDED

BY MANNER IN WHICH THESE EVENTS WERE COVERED BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA, WHICH WAS ALWAYS FIRST WITH DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF PROGRESSIVE DEGRADATION OF THE EMPEROR -- "DRAGGING THE EMPEROR THROUGH THE MUD", AS HE PUT IT. HAILE SELASSIE, HE SAID, WAS KNOWN BY ALL, ESPECIALLY IN AFRICA, AS OLD AND FIRM FRIEND OF USTEND HE WOULD HAVE EXPECTED FAR DIFFERENT TREATMENT FROM OFFICIAL US GOVERNMENT RADIO. TOURE SAID THAT VOA COVERAGE WILL HURT US IN EYES OF MANY AFRICANS, "THOUGH OTHERS MAY NOT SAY SO AS FRANKLY".

3. TOURE SAID THAT HE NATURALLY WELCOMED DEMOCRATIZATION IN ETHIOPIA AND HAD PERSONALLY ADVISED THE EMPEROR MANY TIMES TO COME TO TERMS WITH PROGRESSIVE FORCES AND TO END HIS LONG CAREER WITH DIGNITY. HE HAD SENT HAND-WRITTEN LETTERS AND HAD SENT SPECIAL DELEGATIONS JUST FOR THIS PURPOSE. TOURE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE MIGHT DISAGREE WITH THE EMPEROR, HE HAD GREATEST RESPECT FOR HAILE SELASSIE'S LONG AND HONORABLE CAREER AND -- HE STRESSED ONCE AGAIN -- HIS DIGNITY.
TODMAN

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